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SCHOPENHAUER

I

IF we estimate the philosophers of the nineteenth century not by the influence which they severally exerted in their own day, or by the intrinsic value of their work, but solely by the measure in which they are still able to command attention, none of them seems to be so effective as Arthur Schopenhauer. He predicted that his books would be alive when those of contemporary teachers had been laid to rest in the library, and his words have come true. There is not the smallest

doubt that he attracts a much larger number of readers than Hegel, Comte and Mill could now claim between them; and, even if we take the best known of those who have arisen since his death, neither in Herbert Spencer nor in Hartmann nor yet in Nietzsche has he any serious rival in point of popularity. To a greater extent than any of these writers he appeals not only to the student but also to the man in the street, and he captivates not only the man in the street but also another person whom he never had in view, the lady in the drawing-room. We are told that he excites this wide interest because he deals with the permanent problems of life in language of extraordinary skill and lucidity, and, in particular, because he offers us a picture of human suffering in which we must be

very fortunate if we cannot recognise, from our own experience, some elements of truth. What seems equally certain is that he possesses, in a high degree, the power of arousing mingled emotions, of alternately charming and repelling, of making us admire and yet dislike him, of forcing us to accept many of his facts although we may disagree with most of his conclusions; and this is a power which often exercises a strong fascination.

There are some people, indeed, who, after taking the trouble to discover what Schopenhauer means, condemn him outright. There are still more who mention his name with a contempt which is clearly not bred by familiarity with his writings. But, on the other hand, he has a great many champions who speak of him as

though no other philosopher deserved a moment's notice. They describe him as a man who has seen the world and knows of what he is talking. They praise his astonishing insight and his no less astonishing originality of treatment. They assert that the most significant thing about him is the way in which he combines different points of view. He is represented as uniting philosophy and science ; as providing in his doctrine that the ultimate reality is Will something that may reconcile the idealism of the earlier half of the century with the evolutionism which dominated the later half. Although he ranks as a keen student of nature and welcomes every established truth in that domain, he is convinced, we are told, that the order of nature is not the only order ; that science in its so-called facts

is dealing merely with the appearance of things and nowhere penetrates to reality ; that of all creeds materialism is the most absurd. Again, while he knows nothing of the existence of any God, his adherents point to his profound belief in the necessity of a religion, and to the great stress which he lays upon the moral character of his own theory ; they proclaim that he has something of the mystic about him, and that, in aim and intention at least, he is an ascetic. Finally—and this, they say, is the crowning proof of his insight—although he is himself the outcome of an advancing civilization, and sees around him great institutions for the relief of misery and distress, for the checking of cruelty, for the promotion of justice and peace, he gives no encouragement to any foolish hopes of a golden age in the

future ; he maintains, as the last lesson of practical wisdom, that no outward improvement, no influence of law or education, can ever effect any real change ; that life, however fair and pleasant some of its aspects may be, is a struggle which must end in defeat, a long desire which can never be satisfied ; and that by its very constitution the world is foredoomed to pain and suffering.

Apart from the reputation which Schopenhauer has won by his writings, he owes some of the interest which he possesses to his complex personality. Strange contradictions between his thoughts and his acts have given him equivocal character. If every man is in his way a problem, this German thinker is one of the most curious. Never, it is said, has anyone who preached self-renunciation as

the highest of all duties, and sympathy and benevolence as the very heart of morality, exhibited so little of these qualities in his own conduct. Never has anyone who believed that this is the worst of all possible worlds, and that mere existence is pain, held the doctrine in a less painful fashion, or been so fortunately endowed with health, independence, freedom from common anxieties, and the opportunity of devoting himself to high intellectual aims. Never was anyone who proclaimed that a serene tolerance is the only temper worthy of a philosopher so violent in his denunciations, or so infected with the passions of envy and malice, or, while professing to despise his fellow-men, so eager for their applause. Such is the impression which Schopenhauer's biographers manage to convey in describing the

career which began in a merchant's house in Dantzic in 1788 and ended in solitary rooms at Frankfurt in 1860 ; and when we follow him through his boyhood at home and abroad, his education in men and things rather than in books, his feud with his mother and sister, his struggles and disappointments, and finally the long years of seclusion in which he laboured and waited for success ; when we hear of his coarse adventures, his rough and overbearing demeanour, his quarrels, his suspicions, his vanities, and then, again, of his quiet moments, his efforts and aspirations, his desire for a worthy existence, and the many noble ideas which he expresses, we can hardly fail to be inquisitive about the man himself.

But when we ask whether his writings can be brought into any intelligible

relation with his life and character, we encounter a difficult subject, and one which he expressly forbids us to touch. 'To read a philosopher's biography,' he says, 'instead of studying his thoughts is like neglecting a picture and attending only to the style of the frame, debating whether it is carved well or ill, and what was the cost of gilding it.' The notion that a man's thoughts could be usefully tested and their value determined by looking to his conduct he resented as an impertinence. 'Because,' he continued, 'a great man has opened up to people the treasures of his inmost being, and by a supreme effort of his faculties produced works which not only redound to their elevation and enlightenment, but will also benefit their posterity to the tenth and twentieth generation ; because he has pre-

sented mankind with a matchless gift, the varlets think themselves justified in sitting in judgment on his personal morality, and trying whether they cannot discover some spot in him, in order to soothe the pain which they feel at the sight of so great a mind compared with the overwhelming sense of their own nothingness.'

That there is a good deal of reason in this remonstrance, in spite of its arrogant tone, is undeniable. We are all agreed that there are many kinds of high intellectual achievement which are in no way affected by moral obliquity or shortcoming on the part of their authors. But, nevertheless, in Schopenhauer's case we must make the very attempt which he deprecates ; we must ask how he stood to his writings, not out of any desire to discover spots in him, but because there is no other

way of putting him and his work in their right position.

Another circumstance in Schopenhauer's life which, as soon as he came to be known, helped to arouse interest in him, was his failure to influence his contemporaries, and his confident belief that however much they might neglect him posterity would do him justice. At first sight there is something unaccountable in the fact that the brilliant writer who now occupies, and possibly will always occupy, a high place amongst the speculative thinkers of modern times, and is one of the very few who have become generally popular, should have been ignored by his own generation. When we remember how his chief work, which has been sold by the thousand since his death and has formed the theme of hundreds of books,

pamphlets and essays, was noticed in only three or four learned journals when he brought it out in 1818, and how a long time afterwards the publisher informed the author that he had been obliged to dispose of most of the copies as waste paper, by way, as he added, of 'making at least some use of them,' we might well repeat the classic words that books have their fates, and abandon the attempt to understand so strange a case. For thirty years, as we know, the only mark of public recognition that reached the lonely thinker came from a remote town in Norway, where a scientific society sent him a prize for an essay on the freedom of the will. Even when he determined to write a series of popular essays dealing with topics not fully discussed in his large treatise, he had the mortification

of seeing the fruits of his labour rejected in succession by the three publishers to whom he offered it as a gift. In the sober annals of philosophy this story of so complete and so protracted a failure turning at last to sudden success is, as far as I am aware, without a parallel. How are we to explain it? In the midst of his disappointment the victim, we are told, was ready to ascribe his failure to the wiles of prosperous rivals and their resolve to maintain a discreet silence about work which they recognised to be very superior to their own. We must try to find some more acceptable reason.

II

What, then, is Schopenhauer's philosophy? What are we to make of his doc-

trine that the ultimate reality is Will? He himself describes it as an answer to that perennial question of the meaning of existence which previous thinkers had been asking in vain. He tells us that religion no less than philosophy is an attempt to explain the world, and in this respect may be called the metaphysics of the masses; but that, while religion adopts the easy expedient of a supernatural revelation to solve the many perplexities of human life, the business of philosophy is to keep within the facts and take account of them all. He claims to be the first to accomplish this business properly and to discover the great secret. In his own view the explanation which he offers is simple, and therefore possesses the outward mark of truth; is thoroughly coherent, and thus exhibits the inner mark

as well ; and is so many-sided as to throw light on the whole range of experience. In a fit of enthusiasm he likens it to a citadel with a hundred gates. He tells us that wherever we make our entrance we shall find a road leading to the centre.

Now, before we go any nearer, let us ask ourselves how this structure arose in his mind ; let us see whether we cannot recognise some of the materials of which he formed it. For in our own day—whatever may have been the case in Schopenhauer's—we have attained the conviction that in any scheme of thought there is not only a personality at work but also the power of the past ; that all originality is relative ; and that, if we would understand in what any new venture consists, we must first of all consider how it came into being. To this rule the philosopher, of all men,

is no exception. The study in which he is engaged, even though it be continually advancing, is at any given moment largely a tradition, and however much any individual may add to it he receives incomparably more. So far from building a house of his own, much less a citadel, he only enters into possession of a room or two in the ancient edifice of knowledge. The edifice is so vast and so irregular, and is constantly undergoing so much repair, that the multitude outside is apt to fancy that great additions are always in progress. But the truth is that most of the tenants are content to enjoy the shelter and protection which others have provided, while of those who try to improve their dwelling few are successful. The man who throws out a new wing is rare; he is fortunate if he can even make

a window in a gloomy passage. Whatever he may succeed in doing, however, one thing is certain : his plans of construction are largely determined by the labours of those who went before him. In plain language, be any thinker's claims to originality what they may, he remains for the most part what the past has made him, whether his work consists in developing the ideas which he has received or in opening up new ones by way of correction or contrast. How, then, is Schopenhauer's system to be—as the phrase goes—historically explained?

In pronouncing the fundamental reality to be Will, he was, in a word, protesting against a phase of the great movement which had lasted, in one form or another, from the times of the Renaissance to his own day. The revolt against

authority, and especially against theological authority, had inevitably produced an intellectual temper in which Reason and Reason alone was regarded as the final arbiter in all questions of life and knowledge. Of the profound results of this change none was more significant than the effect on the course of philosophical speculation. While the Church had endeavoured to show that the state of the world must be wholly judged by the requirements of some divine plan, an attempt was now made to bring everything to the test of human intelligence. But with further reflection difficulties arose, and for some two hundred years certain sets of thinkers, all alike professing to be guided by Reason, found themselves in mutual conflict. One set tried to combine the inherited scheme of theology with a scheme of their own or with

the results of natural science. Another set wished to keep religious theories entirely apart from other branches of thought, because they wanted either to reserve such theories for separate treatment or else to deny their validity altogether. A third set were all for giving Reason the fullest play. The general tendency was to account for the facts of individual and social life by trying to justify them; religion itself was accepted, not as something handed down by a Church, or revealed in a Book, but as something intrinsically rational. Philosophers like Leibnitz contended that, as the universe showed many marks of divine power and wisdom, we ought to conclude that evil is part of some plan of ultimate good beyond the range of our defective knowledge; and that, as God must be conceived to be infinitely just and his

final purpose infinitely good, there was sufficient ground for looking upon the world in its present condition of development as the best that was possible. Poets like Pope took up the same optimistic argument ; they maintained that, however little we might see or understand, one truth was clear : ' Whatever is, is right.' The argument, indeed, did not escape criticism. By one of the most curious coincidences in literature Voltaire in his *Candide* and Johnson in his *Rasselas* assailed it from different points of view in the same year. But the thinkers who regarded Reason as providing for all religious, moral, and intellectual needs—in whose eyes it was a barrel of meal and a cruse of oil which could never fail—gradually won great influence. There were many exponents of this view everywhere. The most

courageous of them—such as Wolf in Germany, and the other leaders of what is called the Age of Enlightenment—ended by appealing to Reason as the vehicle of certain eternal and necessary truths to which the human mind could always have recourse. They even went so far as to suppose that the primary doctrines of Christian morality and religion, the existence of God, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul, could be proved once for all with mathematical precision.

But while the Rationalists, as they were called, were thus deifying Reason, there were other thinkers examining its claims. Psychologists began to ask what knowledge was—how much of it was gained from experience, and how much was innate; and following close upon them came the Sceptics, who maintained that

both matter and mind were nothing but sequences of impressions or ideas, and that all our boasted truths were the outcome of mere custom. Reason seemed to be thus reduced for the moment to a state of illusion. The Rationalists, of course, had to settle accounts with the theory, specially fostered by the growth of natural science, that matter is the ultimate reality, and with a special form of that theory, that thought is in some way a function of matter. But the chief difficulty which they had to face was of a more dangerous character, as it threatened the very ground on which they stood. Speculation as to eternal truths was interrupted, particularly in England, by the practical questions, What, after all, do we know? What is this mind which is so lauded as the instrument of Reason? Is it simply a sensitive

plate registering whatever impressions it receives, or does it by its own action help to make experience? Are its contents wholly derived from without, or are any of them peculiar to itself? Has it any fixed or stable principles, or are our firm beliefs—our beliefs, for example, that every effect has a cause—only the result of habit and association? Then, again, what is matter? Can we go beyond our impressions? Do things exist beyond our perception of them? Is the objective world, equally with the subjective mind, an illusion? These were the questions that were carried from Locke to Berkeley, from Berkeley to Hume, and finally from Hume to Kant, who may be said to have brought the philosophy of the eighteenth century to a close, and to have laid the foundations of all philosophy afresh. Kant's achieve-

ment, put in the briefest words, was to re-assert the claims of Reason, but also to limit their range—to show that there were some elements in the mind which underlay the very possibility of experience, and therefore could not be derived from it, but that, on the other hand, Reason as such was for ever bound up with the things of sense, and could not rise to anything beyond them. He maintained that, although we are obliged to assume the existence of a reality beyond the things of sense to account for their action on the mind, this ‘thing in itself,’ as he called it, is out of the reach of speculation. But nevertheless he held, as we know, that this ‘thing in itself’ is dimly discernible by the practical Reason or, in a word, by the Will as a divine order, and is linked in some mysterious fashion with the moral

element in man. What Kant thus did was to show, in effect, that life is more than knowledge. We are all aware how Fichte took up Kant's work and endeavoured to unite the speculative and the practical elements which his master had sundered, and how his way of bringing about this union was to argue that the things of sense were created by the primal activity of the ego, and that therefore the whole world of matter and thought depended on the Will. 'My philosophy,' he said, 'makes life, the system of feelings and desires supreme, and leaves knowledge only the post of an observer.'

That the official leaders of philosophy in Germany after Kant's death should have been engaged in making systems out of the Reason which he had thus restored to

a conditioned sovereignty, and that a series of intellectual ventures, at once dogmatic and highly speculative, should have been the result of his critical efforts, is sufficiently surprising. But he had left many problems to his successors. They were not content with the opposition which he had assumed between the subject and the object, between the self-conscious mind and the world of experience ; they had to reconcile, if they could, the apparent divergence between the powers of the theoretical and the practical faculty ; in their search for a principle that would explain everything, most of them found no room for that mysterious 'thing in itself' which he had placed behind the things of sense. In maintaining that the universe in all its aspects was a manifestation of unconditioned Reason, or, as they preferred to say, of the Absolute, they

were trying to solve these problems. But Schopenhauer was also one of Kant's successors ; he claimed, in fact, to be the true heir to the throne. So far as the Will was dealt with by those who in his opinion had unlawfully seized his heritage, there is little need to point out that none of them made it the basis of a purely philosophic system. We must remember that Fichte, for example, put the principle to a distinctly theological use, for he ended by tracing all things to the work of an Absolute Ego, which was none other than the infinite Moral Will, or the Universal Being which he called God. That the movement of thought which began by applying the test of Reason alone should as its last word pronounce the Will to be the channel by which we attain to truth is a remarkable fact in the history of speculation. Nor is

this result without a special significance of its own in connexion with the teachings of Christianity.

When Schopenhauer began to think and write, the notion that the Will was in some way at the foundation of things was, then, part of the very air that he breathed. This particular reaction against Rationalism he shared to the full. He was also under the influence of a movement which had profound effects on the whole life and literature of his time. Opposition to the worship of Reason took a general form which we know as Romanticism ; that is to say, a reaction against the morality of culture and routine, the respect for classical forms, and the superficial view of history and civilization, which had characterized the preceding age. As the movement appealed

to the emotions rather than to the intellect, it had a strong attraction for any one who regarded the intellect as a subordinate element in human nature. Further, in its longings and states of exaltation, its search for the beautiful and the mysterious, its conviction that truth was to be found below the surface, far from the commonplace present, and, if anywhere, in the depths of the heart, it awakened an active response in a philosopher only too ready to brood over the eternal conflict between high aspirations and miserable facts. Most of all, however, was he under the spell of the idea, fostered by the writings of men like Tieck and Novalis, that the most direct and profound revelation of the meaning of life was given, not by science but by art, more particularly by music and poetry.

Again and again he insisted that philosophy must be based on insight, and that its failure in the past had always arisen from the attempt to derive it from reasoning. 'The capacity,' he declared, 'for combining ideas may make a scholar, but can as little make a philosopher as it can make a poet, a painter, or a musician.'

But, apart from its devotion to art, the feature of Romanticism which most plainly re-appears in Schopenhauer is its interest in Oriental literature. This was a part of its general devotion to the distant and the past. While he was still a young man he read with enthusiasm a Latin version of the Upanishads, in which the philosophic elements in the Vedas are expounded as a system of mystical pantheism. He was familiar, too, with a volume by Friedrich Schlegel on the

language and wisdom of the Hindoos, and he had seen the earlier works of Jones and Colebrooke, the English pioneers in the study of Sanskrit. When we consider how many facilities are offered by modern scholars to anyone anxious in these days to investigate the treasures of Brahman and Buddhist thought, how can we fail to be astonished at the use which Schopenhauer made of such slender resources as were open to him? All through his writings he constantly refers to the Sacred Books of the East, and so much impressed was he with their importance that he uttered a prophecy, which cannot be said to have been fulfilled, that they would effect in the nineteenth century as powerful a renaissance in Europe as the study of Greek had accomplished in the sixteenth. In his later years he described

the Upanishads as the most profitable and elevating reading in the world, and the same consolation when he came to die as they had been to him in his life.

That with these interests Schopenhauer should have combined a careful study of the works of certain French materialists who flourished just before his time is not so perplexing as it may seem. He had an eager desire to know everything that science could say on the relation between the body and the mind, for he was convinced, as we shall presently see, that that relation supplied the key to the riddle of existence. Nay, he expressed himself in thorough agreement with Helvetius and Cabanis when they argued that intellect was simply a function of the brain. The estimation in which he held Helvetius may be gauged by his assertion that this

author must be the favourite reading of the Almighty. Chamfort, too, is another French writer for whom he entertained a high regard.

Such, then, are some of the materials which we can recognise as having been used in the construction of our philosopher's citadel. As we approach it, he tells us that the whole fabric is designed to exhibit a single thought. That the world is the manifestation of Will, everywhere one and the same, is the truth which he declares his system to embody and all his writings to expound and illustrate. Previous thinkers, he is ready to admit, may have shown traces of this truth, but so obscured by absurdities as to be hardly discernible. His doctrine as a whole, he believes, could not have arisen until the light of the Upanishads, of Plato, and of Kant, had

shone upon one man's mind at the same time.¹ Let us see, firstly, how he arrives at his single thought, and, secondly, how he applies it to the solution of certain problems of life and knowledge.

III

Schopenhauer starts from the position that our knowledge of the world is confined to the way in which it appears to us. 'There is no truth,' he says at the beginning of his chief work, 'which is more certain, more independent of all other truths, and less in need of being proved, than that the world as presented to our senses is only an object in relation to a subject, the perception of a perceiver.' He warns us against supposing that what

¹ *Neue Paralipomena*, ed. Grisebach, § 637.

is here implied is that the world does not exist, when all that is meant is that its existence depends upon its being perceived. Of this we can all be convinced if we remember that such qualities as sound, smell, and colour inhere not in the things with which we associate them, but in us ; the sound is not in the bell but in our ear ; the colour is not in the rose but in our eye. Nor need we reflect very deeply to discover that the qualities of solidity, extension, motion, and so forth, which seem to belong to certain things, also exist only in and for the senses which apprehend them. Unless a man could recognise this simple truth ; nay, unless all things had not at times appeared to him as mere phantoms or illusions, Schopenhauer would deny that he had any concern with philosophy. Although, he said, Kant

was the first to explain the truth clearly, it was in nowise a new one. Plato held, more than two thousand years ago, that the world of appearance, with its ceaseless change, was not the only world ; that men were like prisoners in a cave, chained with their backs to the light, and taking the transient shadows on the wall for the vision of reality. The sages of India, long before Plato, regarded the world of sense as *Mâyâ* or illusion, and life, with all its thoughts and desires, its pleasures and pains, as a dream from which true knowledge can alone awake us. The greatest poets had said the same thing :

‘ We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.’

But we need not, he would have said, look to Greek speculation or to the ancient wisdom

of the East, or listen to the words of a Shakespeare, to be assured of this truth. There must be moments in the life of every man when he is conscious of it for himself.

But, on the other hand, to believe that there is no reality underlying the things of sense seemed to Schopenhauer, as it seems to most men, impossible. What this reality might be was the question of questions, and, in his opinion, no philosopher had as yet given any answer. That it could not be reached through the things of sense was obvious, and on the path of reason the greatest thinkers had sought it without success. Even a Kant had declared that the 'thing in itself' was for ever beyond the range of speculation, although in what he had said about the practical Reason he seemed on the very verge of the great discovery.

This discovery his disciple now claimed to make. If the world of sense is only an object in relation to a subject, may not the subject, he asked, afford some glimpse into reality? Although we cannot take the fortress from without, is there nothing in ourselves which enables us to effect an entrance, as it were, by an underground passage? 'I know myself,' says Schopenhauer, 'in two ways: I know myself as a body, as a thing of a particular size and shape, as an object extended in space, persisting through time, and standing in a relation of cause and effect with other objects. But I also know myself as a being which feels and acts, which desires and strives—in a word, as a subject which wills. In the depths of my consciousness this inward being is revealed to me as beyond the restraints of space and time

and outside the network of cause and effect. It is known to me with an intimacy and a certainty with which nothing else is known, and I feel it to be that which is permanent and real. But obviously these two ways in which I know myself are somehow connected ; this body of mine, this object in space, is in some way one with my inward being. I find that in my own self object and subject are united, and thus in the depths of my consciousness the truth dawns upon me : the Will is the reality behind the things of sense.

We see this, he says, clearly enough in actions which we call voluntary ; but the same is true of those which we call involuntary, such as the action of the heart, breathing digestion, and so forth. All bodily actions, voluntary or involuntary, are governed by nerves, and it would be

absurd to suppose that the nerves governing voluntary actions are the medium of Will, and those governing involuntary actions are the medium of something else. As a matter of fact, involuntary actions, which are expressions of the unconscious Will, may be raised to consciousness, in the form of bodily suffering, by being impeded or checked or else unduly excited. Moreover, when outward influences give us pleasure or pain, they do so because they affect the Will ; they produce in us a sense of willing or of not willing them. The reason why pleasure and pain move us so much more than mere ideas is that they touch that which is deepest in us. Then, again, repression of the Will, such as takes place in fear, anxiety, or grief, has an immediate result upon the body, and disturbs its functions. Such are some of the facts

to which Schopenhauer points for confirmation of what he calls 'the miracle *par excellence*,' namely, that the body and the Will are identical in the sense that one is only the outward expression of the other.

He is careful, however, to remind us that this truth in no way conflicts with any scientific explanation of the body and its various functions. Self-consciousness and science have here to do, he says, with two different things. The truth on which he insists is obvious. Self-consciousness assures me that when I raise my arm I am performing an act of Will. Physiology tells me, on the other hand, that the raising of my arm is due to the contraction of certain muscles; that this contraction in its turn is due to the setting free of some of the energy contained in the muscles, and that this energy is ultimately traceable

to what I eat. The body, physiology advises me, is a machine—a machine for converting the potential energy derived from food into the various forms of actual energy. It might even go further, and suggest to me that the body is itself a development of energy; but what this energy which is thus transformed is in itself, and in what way its manifestations are related to consciousness, physiology has not hitherto been able to tell me. At the same time, I feel with a certainty which no physiological explanation can impart, but for which I cannot give any reason, that when I raise my arm the outward action is, on its inner side, an exercise of Will. How the matter of which my arm is composed and that state of consciousness which I call my Will are conjoined, is a mystery beyond the reach of

science ; and the man who can solve it is the man for whom the world is waiting.

This truth, then, that the body is only the outward expression of the Will, of which every man must be immediately conscious in his own person, supplies him, says Schopenhauer, with the key to the riddle of the universe. If a certain object—namely, his body—is the expression of his Will, are not all other men's bodies in like manner the expression of their Wills ? And since the human body does not differ very much from the bodies of other animals, the same must be true of them too. What is so fundamentally true of these organisms cannot but be true of all organisms ; and thus plants, which on their outer side are organic objects of sense, are on their inner side expressions of Will, just in the same way, although not in the same

degree, as the bodies of animals. The argument must be applicable by analogy to inorganic matter as well, and to all those forces of nature of which matter is the vehicle.

For call the various forces—impulses, instincts, acts of intelligence, and all that they produce—by whatever name we like, how else can we explain them, asks our philosopher, but as expressions of Will? Animals, plants, inorganic matter—what are they on their outer side but objects of sense, appearances behind which we must suppose that there is some reality? And how else can we grasp that reality, or understand the energy which these objects of sense display, but by reference to what we feel to underlie ourselves as objects of sense? To the mere intellect things appear separate, individual,

inscrutable ; but when we retire into the innermost depths of our consciousness, where we feel that there is neither time nor space nor any network of cause and effect, the mystery of the world is lightened. In the lines so often quoted from Wordsworth we possess, in this contemplative state,

‘ A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused . . .
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.’

Thus by an argument at once philosophical, scientific, and poetical, Schopenhauer seems to reach what he calls ‘ the foundation of all true philosophy,’ the statement, namely, that our real being is also the real being of the universe.

This is the single thought which Schopenhauer declares his entire system

to embody. We shall, of course, fail to understand what he means by Will if we think of it only in the form which it assumes in ourselves. His whole contention is that Will is all and every kind of energy, physical and psychical. It is an elemental force, a striving, an effort towards being. To describe the first shapes which this elemental force assumes he can find no better language than that which Plato used in connexion with his Eternal Ideas. They were the great forms or archetypes from which all the particular and individual manifestations of Will proceeded, and to which, in the various degrees in which such manifestations reached perfection, they tended to return. In its lowest stages the Will was blind, stolid, invariable ; we recognise it as mere resistance or cohesion. At other

stages we are aware of it as gravitation, as electricity, as chemical attraction, as the process of crystallization. In the organic realm it takes the form of growth at the expense of what is around it; the plant silently draws nourishment from the earth. The animal, on the other hand, has to seek its nourishment; consequently, it develops perception, a rudimentary intellect, telling it where nourishment may be found; and it also develops the means by which it not only perceives its prey but seizes it as well. At this stage the Will is no longer blind; it seeks what helps and avoids what hinders its expression; it takes a form which we call instinct; the instinct may, in the course of years, come to look like the higher form which we call intelligence, as in the case of a dog or a horse; if the years are

prolonged, it may resemble wisdom, as in the case of an elephant. But only in man does the Will become clearly conscious of itself. It there develops an intellect which mirrors the whole universe.

The relation which Schopenhauer thus establishes between the Will and the intellect is the most important feature of his single thought, and plays a great part in his whole philosophy. The intellect, he says, arises as the servant of the Will at a certain stage of its manifestation: the Will takes shape as matter, matter evolves an organism, the organism evolves a brain, and the brain evolves intellect. The intellect is thus a secondary or even a tertiary affair. Its original business is to minister to the needs of the Will, but its highest task is to enable the Will to understand itself. The way in which the

Will issues in different manifestations, and the effort of each of them to gain full expression explains, in Schopenhauer's view, the perpetual conflict everywhere observable in external nature; and the struggle between the lower and the higher elements in man is nothing, he thinks, but the struggle between the Will as a blind force and the Will as lighted up by intellect. We shall see more fully when we come to this application of his single thought to art, morality, and religion, what use he makes of this relation between the Will and the intellect.

But before we go further let us ask what criticism has to say of this single thought on which he builds his whole philosophy. Criticism, in a word, has made short work of it by showing that it contains a fundamental contradiction. How

are we to reconcile the statement that matter evolves brain and brain evolves mind with the position from which Schopenhauer started, that all objects, of which the brain is one, exist only in and for the mind? If he could agree with Cabanis in regarding mind as the function of a certain portion of matter, there is no denying that, idealist as he professed himself to be, there was a side to his philosophy inconsistent with any such profession. This mixture of Cabanis and Kant leads to the curious result that brain is only a phenomenon of brain. The difficulty may be put in another way by pointing out that, according to this view, time and space exist only in the mind, and that the mind, which is inseparable from the brain, is itself in time and space. Schopenhauer was quite conscious of this vicious circle in his argument,

but none of his various efforts to extricate himself from it were successful. If he were hard pressed, he would make his escape by saying that the difficulty was of a transcendental character, with which he as the philosopher of experience had nothing to do. He would quote what Goethe wrote for a student who asked too many questions: 'God doubtless made the nuts, but he didn't crack them.'

Then, again, the argument that something of which we are conscious in ourselves is identical with the reality behind the things of sense is open to a serious objection. This ultimate reality is, on his own showing, neither in space nor in time, nor yet subject to the law of cause and effect. But the Will which is manifested in us is known to us only by its acts in time, and by the extent to which it is affected

by motives. It is therefore a phenomenon and cannot be identical with the ultimate reality. Nor, further, can we agree with Schopenhauer in the absolute separation which he makes between Will and intellect. Will, as we know it, is inconceivable without some admixture of intellect to define the ends at which it aims; and, on the other hand, intellect is inconceivable without some admixture of Will, for the mere fact of giving attention to anything involves an effort. Finally, if the ultimate reality, as he declares, is everywhere one and the same, and is all and everything, how can it assume different forms? If it assumes different forms, there must be some other cause at work introducing diversity, and the Will cannot be itself everything.

IV

So much, then, for Schopenhauer's single thought, or, rather, so much for the manner in which he arrived at it. The thought itself may be fruitful, although from its very nature he may have been unable to avoid contradictions in stating it. Other philosophers have encountered similar misfortunes. Fruitful, or at least interesting, the single thought certainly was in its application to human life, to art, morality, and religion. But before we pass to these topics let us briefly note his attitude towards science. Let us also see what he had to say about the branch of knowledge which we call history.

When Schopenhauer spoke of mind being a function of the brain, he seemed to be talking the language of the purest

materialism. He was, indeed, firmly convinced that so long as we confine ourselves to the things of sense the mechanical explanation is the only possible view, and that in the things of sense, including the activity of the brain, we are bound down in the iron chains of necessity. But all that science can do, he argued, is to discover the laws by which the things of sense follow one another in space and time ; about the inner reality of any one of those things it can give us no information whatever. It explains any given fact as the effect of certain causes. If asked to explain these causes, it regards them as the effect of prior causes ; but as to the power which keeps the whole chain in motion—the force which drives the machine—it has nothing to say. But if science asserted that matter and its changes were

the whole of existence, that the things of sense were the ultimate reality, Schopenhauer was up in arms. Of this theory of the world he spoke with the utmost disdain as 'the philosophy of the barber's man and the druggist's apprentice.' When University teachers like Moleschott and Büchner lost their places for writing books in defence of it, he said that they had got only what they deserved. Never had he read such crude, ignorant nonsense as Moleschott's *Cycle of Life*, while Büchner's *Force and Matter* was not only a danger to morality, but false and stupid as well. Materialism of this kind has passed away for the moment, partly under the influence of certain speculative tendencies in biology, but also owing in no small measure to the philosophic objections of which Schopenhauer was here the mouthpiece. The real

interest of his whole attitude towards science, however, is in the place which his own theory occupies in regard to the Darwinian theory of Evolution. He does not appear to have read *The Origin of Species*, which appeared only a short time before his death, but he saw Huxley's review of the book in the *Times*. In a letter to a friend in March, 1860, he declares that, so far as he can judge by the extracts there given, Darwin's theory stands in no relation to his own, but is a piece of downright Empiricism, and therefore insufficient to explain Evolution.¹ He looked upon it simply as a variation of Lamarck's view. He himself, as we know, was committed to the opinion that species were permanent forms in which the will was manifested. They were for him

¹ Schopenhauer's *Briefe*, ed. Grisebach, p. 384.

examples of the Platonic Ideas as governing the evolution of organic life. Whether, had he understood Darwin thoroughly and seen the extent to which his theory was accepted, he would have welcomed it as testifying to the truth of his own, is doubtful. But we may at least assert that one of the chief reasons of Schopenhauer's influence in the later half of the nineteenth century is the possibility which he offers of uniting physics and metaphysics through the fact of Evolution. The tendency of science, both then and now, was to become speculative. We see the tendency most plainly, perhaps, in Mr. Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable as affording the only possible reconciliation between science and religion. To this Unknowable Schopenhauer's doctrine of a blind Will striving to manifest itself is the nearest

parallel that philosophy can present, and in the continual effort of that Will after physical life, and its tendency to pass into a moral life in human beings, it seems to supply the elemental force which Evolution assumes. Finally, in connexion with his attitude towards science, we must not forget a special feature of Schopenhauer's thought. He was disposed to lend a ready ear to those tales of clairvoyance, telepathy, sympathetic cures and the like, which materialists are apt to denounce in advance. He saw nothing impossible in the reality behind the veil asserting itself in these ways in enhanced conditions of brain and body. In this reality, this all-pervading Will, there could be neither space nor time ; and thus the phantom of a distant friend, or the vision of the future, or any mysterious relation between human beings,

might well, he argued, be possible, and might afford a proof of the fundamental unity of nature.

His attitude to history and historical study was highly characteristic of him. Philosophy and science, he said, had to do with ideas and conceptions ; history only with endless particulars, with things that happened once and then ceased to exist. Instead of dealing with general and permanent truths, its sphere was the incidental, the transient, the things of sense which appeared for a moment and then passed away. History could never regard its facts as illustrations of a universal law, for it could never rise to any such law ; it was always crawling on the ground of individual experience. It was related to time much as geography to space, and, like geography, it was a

description and not a scientific system. Even its alleged facts were of a precarious character ; hardly any event was ever correctly reported ; the greater the detail into which it entered, the more it resembled pure fiction. Again, history tries to make us believe that the events which it records were in their time something new, whereas the whole aim of philosophy is to help us to see that what is now was in the past and will be in the future. History, he argued, displays the same trivial events perpetually recurring in different forms ; it is a vast collection of lumber, and the philosopher knows enough of it who has read his Herodotus. He was never tired of quoting Aristotle's saying that poetry is more philosophical and a worthier thing than history ; for poetry, he declared, presents not these or those particular men,

with their plans and schemes, but the broad lines and eternal types of human nature. But the greatest of all delusions, in Schopenhauer's opinion, was to suppose that the history of the world exhibits any organic unity, any regular process of development from lower to higher, any revelation of the principles which have hitherto formed the guiding influence of life, and will in the end bring mankind to happiness. He professed to regard this view of history as an absolute chimæra, and on Hegel, its chief exponent in his own age, he poured out the full vials of his indignation. The true philosophy of history, he declared, was not to regard the temporal aims of the race as significant stages in a great progress, but to recognise that everywhere and at all times, in spite of difference of circumstance, of language,

of costume, of morals and manners, mankind was the same, and that the fundamental qualities of head and heart never changed. Yet, in spite of this radical denunciation, he was willing to allow that history was not altogether worthless. Its real value, he said, was that it did for mankind what reason did for the individual. As a man's reason enables him to extend his gaze from the present to the past and the future, so history gives each generation the sense of existing not by itself alone, but as a part of all mankind. In other words, history is the consciousness of the human race.

How we are to reconcile this last statement with the position that history deals only with endless particulars, and with the transient and the incidental, is not clear. The admission which he makes

might have suggested to Schopenhauer that he had carried his depreciation of historical study too far ; that history as the consciousness of the human race may become the vehicle of lessons which cannot be learned elsewhere, and, chief among them, the lesson that, account for it as we may, religions and philosophies are largely the results of an historical process. His view of history is not, of course, popular with scholars to whom research is the one thing needful, or with thinkers who are over-impressed with the utility of what they call the historical method as an instrument of truth. But we shall do well not to forget that the lessons which history teaches are read into it from the present, and that in any case, as has been sagaciously observed by an Hegelian writer commenting on Schopenhauer, they are properly

apprehended only by those who already possess a general sense of their value. History must always be subordinate to philosophy, if only for the reason that investigation may supply facts but not the standard for interpreting them. If the historian warns us that every theory that is to hold must be supported by the facts to which it is applied, the philosopher may reply, with Goethe, that the statement of every fact involves a theory. Moreover, the man who has to think out things for himself, and solve the problems of his day, must rely in the main on his own insight; if he appeals to the past, he does so only for the purpose of confirming the convictions with which the present supplies him. The problems to be solved may, perhaps, resemble old ones, but nevertheless they will offer new features and com-

plications ; and the thinker who has to do the work of the present is apt to find that a personality able to focus emotion and appeal directly to the heart is an effective substitute for the idolatrous worship of ancient tradition.

But the feature of Schopenhauer's philosophy which has made him best known, and has led thousands of his readers to regard him as the sole oracle of truth, is not his attitude towards science or history but his dark view of human life. Pessimism, of course, is nothing new. The cry that the evil in the world far outweighs the good comes up to us from every age of which we have any record. There are critics who trace it in the attempt of the primitive man or the savage to appease the anger of those gods whom he sees in the forces of nature. We

hear it in the most ancient of all literatures, in the writings of Brahman priests and Buddhist philosophers. The Jewish preacher warns us that man has no profit of all his labour and of the striving of his heart. The sages and poets of Greece told the same tale; Sophocles declared that the best thing of all was not to be born, and the next best to return as quickly as possible whence we came. Part of the Christian creed is that the prince or ruler of this world is the devil, and that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain. A famous theologian of the third century described the earth as a penitentiary, while one of those whom the Church in later days put to death for their opinions asserted that the human race might well be regarded as an assemblage of evil spirits atoning for their crimes. So, too,

in modern literature the problem of human suffering is the constant theme. We find it in the supreme efforts of the greatest dramatists ; it is equally the burden of *Hamlet* and of *Faust*.

That Schopenhauer was oppressed by this problem even in his youth we know from his biographers. With a natural tendency to gloomy thoughts, he saw it wherever he went, and he felt it in himself. Leibnitz's attempt to justify evil as a necessary element in the promotion of good he denounced as a sophism and a mockery, and the contention that the world in its present state must be the best possible soon induced him to maintain that, on the contrary, it was the worst. To deny that life was a miserable business was in his view futile ; the only question was how to explain the misery.

The explanation which he offered is part and parcel of his general theory that the fundamental reality of all things is incessant effort. The Will, he says, is always striving for self-assertion; it is always aiming at existence. Every individual manifestation of this effort contends with the others for the matter, space, and time which it wants for its complete expression, and therefore the whole world is the scene of a perpetual struggle.

Of this struggle man alone is fully conscious. His intelligence, looking before and after, increases the number of the things in which he strives to find satisfaction for the Will. But no satisfaction can be other than temporary, for the simple reason that, while the things of sense pass away, the Will is permanent. As the real, the fundamental, the positive

element of life, it is perpetually impelling him to be discontented with his condition, and therefore it keeps him in pain. If he has a moment of pleasure, that is only because for a moment his Will is stilled. The ordinary man is led on from one dream of satisfaction to another, only to feel in the end that life is a process of disenchantment; and the higher his intelligence the sooner and the more profoundly is he conscious, not only that he is not happy, but that the most he can hope to secure is a state of peace. For confirmation of his view that pain is the positive element of life Schopenhauer points to the incontrovertible fact that when pleasure comes in abundance, and the Will is apparently satisfied, suffering knocks at our doors again in the form of satiety. The hunt for pleasure defeats

itself. The man who has everything that he wants is, as we say, bored ; and what is boredom but the feeling of vanity, the sense that the satisfaction supposed to have been gained is unreal? A man in this condition desires not to use his time but to kill it ; and, as he can seldom manage to do this by himself, he rushes into society and gets others to help him. There, too, the same feeling soon overtakes him again, and for a brief moment he desires to be alone. Thus, the Will to live drives him from one short satisfaction to another, and his whole existence oscillates between pain and boredom ; he is always trying to escape the one or the other, and as long as he has not learnt the great lesson he never succeeds. Further, when we consider not only the mental sufferings, but also the physical tortures to which

multitudes of men and women have been or will be exposed—wars and massacres, earthquakes and pestilence, slavery and imprisonment, poverty and starvation, bodily disease and agony—the world as a whole may well seem a hell which a Dante might describe, but out of which no Dante could ever construct a paradise. Why, he asks, as a last argument, do we always speak of a future world as a better, if we were not profoundly convinced that the present is fundamentally bad ?

Is there, then, no release from this misery ? Not, says Schopenhauer, for the natural man. Such a man is concerned only with the things which, as he vainly imagines, will gratify him. When he discovers that each individual gratification only increases the desire for a further one, he becomes more and more exacting. He

comes in the end to regard the whole universe as existing to minister only to his needs and make him happy. He assumes that he has a right to happiness, and so he treats his fellow-men as if they were merely the instruments of his pleasure. The function of law and the State is to restrain him, to make him see that others have this supposed right to be happy as well as he, and to punish him for any attack upon their persons or their property. Such restraint, however, is only a temporal and outward justice; the bad man remains bad because his Will has not been altered, but only prevented from attaining its satisfaction.

But there is an eternal justice which stays a man's Will and reveals his error. When the mists of illusion melt and he becomes conscious that his inmost being is

the same as that of all men, he perceives that in injuring his victim he has injured himself. His remorse is the sense that the pain inflicted on others is in very truth his own pain. Hence, says Schopenhauer, the source and strength of all true morality is not, as theologians proclaim, the command of any external God, nor yet, as certain philosophers would have us believe, the general advantage of society, but simply the recognition of this inner identity between our own nature and that of all other beings. The sympathy which is thus awakened is the feeling of underlying unity, and it gives us pleasure because it stills the craving of our individual Will.

Another release from the misery of life is afforded by art. Of the various attempts that have been made to reveal the secrets

of the beautiful, and to interpret the attraction of painting, poetry or music for the human mind, Schopenhauer's is one of the most fascinating. There are moments, he says, in the life of every man when the intellect becomes free from its servitude to the Will ; when, unfettered by any selfish desires, he contemplates the things of the world as simple objects. To the man whose intellect is most fully detached from his Will, these objects reveal themselves in their true nature. He sees them not as they are in relation to other objects, or as clogged by circumstance, but in their real significance. He sees in each of them the manifestation of the Will at a particular stage, the outline of the ultimate form or archetype which it embodies. He perceives, as by a sudden flash, its eternal meaning. Every object thus contemplated

for its own sake alone and in its eternal meaning is, according to Schopenhauer, beautiful. That one thing is more beautiful than another is due to the fact that one thing more than another realizes its ultimate form more perfectly. The further it is removed from the needs of our ephemeral existence the greater the degree to which it stills the craving of the Will. Hence, he says, what is far away in space like the stars, or distant in time like the remote past, works upon us with magical effect. Hence, too, the child, absorbed in observation of the things about it, and with a power of vision developed out of all proportion to its Will, tends to find everything beautiful, and is in that respect, as we know, something of a genius, just as, conversely, the genius is often something of a child.

To perceive this eternal meaning in things and to reveal it to others is, then, the function of the artist. His material varies with the different ways in which the Will seeks expression, following its various manifestations from simple inorganic matter up to the turmoil of thought and emotion in the philosopher and the poet. The lowest in the scale is the architect, who represents the play of such purely physical forces as gravity and resistance ; he shows us the struggle of these forces one against another, whether in their plain significance in the Greek temple, or in the effort to minimize and overcome them in the Gothic cathedral, where in the high arch and the soaring pinnacle he produces a strange sense of infinity and release from the things of earth. The sculptor gives us the ideal of beauty and grace in the human

form. To suppose that he derives this ideal from any comparison of the actual forms which he sees about him is, in our philosopher's view, an absurdity. Being himself a Will striving for manifestation, he has an intuitive knowledge of its ultimate goal, and thus he can in a measure anticipate the meaning of its imperfect phases. So the painter, too, is concerned to bring before us the everlasting significance of the scenes and figures which fill his canvas, and he can show us nothing more expressive or beautiful than the Will in a state of complete rest. The poet by his words and abstractions conveys the great ideas of the world, and, in particular, human character and human fate. He reveals their inner meaning, and he reveals it most effectively in tragedy ; for there he shows us that the Will is by its very nature in perpetual con-

flict, that life is misery, and that only by suffering can we learn resignation. Finally, while these three arts deal with different manifestations of the Will, there is another, the most popular and intelligible, though also the most mysterious of all, which deals with the movements of the Will itself. The supreme art, says Schopenhauer, is music ; for it represents, not this or that particular joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, but joy and sorrow, as it were, in the abstract, and pleasure and pain as they are in their very essence. Music is thus the most complete and immediate image of reality, and this is why it affects us more profoundly than any other art. It is as variable, as inexhaustible as nature itself, and in it the very soul of the world speaks to our own. By thus interpreting existence to us art raises us out of the bondage of par-

ticular desires. Our Will is for the moment in abeyance; we are free from its pain. Thus, says Schopenhauer, does art provide us, in the midst of the turmoil of sense, with a brief foretaste of the Sabbath repose of the blessed.

But while the misery of life may be forgotten for a time in the vision of ideal truth; while the pain of struggling for one's own life may be stilled by struggling for the life of others and by the exercise of charity and love, even here the Will is active, and with its activity suffering must remain. The last and greatest duty is to renounce the Will and to die to all its desires. The man who sees life truly must know that happiness, whether his own or that of others, is impossible, and that the things of sense are a long illusion. He frees himself, not by slaying

his body, which is a thing of sense like the rest, and therefore not his real being, but by slaying the Will. In this highest flight of his philosophy Schopenhauer bids us turn our gaze to those faces of the saints in which Raphael and Correggio have depicted a peace, a calm of the spirit, a profound quiescence, not of this world. These, he exclaims, are the elect, who reveal to us the full measure of our misery. They must console us when we see on the one side the incurable misery which attaches to all manifestations of the Will, and on the other what seems to await us when the Will is finally arrested. They must help us to banish the gloomy sense of that Nothing which hovers behind all self-renunciation as its goal, and which we unreasonably fear as children fear the dark. For let us remember—and this is his last

word—that this Nothing is only the negation of the things of sense, and that ‘behind our present existence there is something else which we can reach only by shuffling off this world.’¹

In emphasizing the character and the Will, rather than the intellect, as the important element in human nature, and the element which best enables a man to understand what life means, Schopenhauer is often said to have been in remarkable accord with Christianity. But there is nothing remarkable in his being in accord with a religion from which he borrowed, and that he made a large use of Christian doctrine admits of no dispute. He professed, however, to have attained to his philosophy by keeping within the limits of experience. He declared that he did not

¹ *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bd. ii., § 70.

look for the explanation of the universe to anything outside it. To have any knowledge of anything not given in the facts of outer and inner consciousness he denounced as a sheer impossibility. He left the gods alone, as he said, and claimed to be left alone in return. There was in his view only one creed to which a sane man could subscribe: 'I believe in a metaphysic.' What he meant by this utterance he explains more clearly in a passage which gives the very kernel of his position: 'To say that the world has only a physical and not a moral significance is the greatest and most pernicious of all errors—the fundamental blunder, the real perversity of mind and temper; and at bottom it is doubtless the tendency which faith personifies as antichrist.'¹ That this declaration

¹ *Zur Ethik: Parerga* II.

reacts on his whole philosophy must, I think, be obvious. The man who could make it cannot have been, in the deepest sense of the word, a pessimist. Nor does a world in which the Will comes to the knowledge of itself, and undergoes a process of purification, seem to me to deserve so much indiscriminate abuse. The world as it is may not, indeed, be perfect, but if it admits of degrees of perfection, if the human beings in it can by an effort make themselves better, there is some hope for it. If those sufferings of the world which Schopenhauer so bitterly described are the means of teaching it that moral significance of things in which he proclaimed his belief, they ought surely in his view to have some justification. In his theory of life in its highest aspects we thus discover a corrective of

his statement that this is the worst of all possible worlds ; for if the world revealed no æsthetic consolations, no moral truths, and no path of enlightenment, it would plainly be worse than it is. To speak of his theory as 'pessimism' is therefore to ignore one half of his teaching, and just the very half which he had in common with Christianity. We shall also do well to remember that he rarely uses the word in his books, and then only as a protest against what is commonly called 'optimism,' and with the general meaning that the world is such that its non-existence were preferable to its existence. That there are better ways of protesting against any view than recourse to its direct contrary suggests the obvious reflection that, after all, both optimism and pessimism are exaggerated, and therefore un-

true, views of life. But to enter upon the wide field of criticism which these extreme views open up is beyond the scope of my present task.

As to the argument by which Schopenhauer arrives at his opinion that the world is the worst possible and then indicates the way of release from its misery, little need be said. A full discussion of the difficulties in his position would proceed largely on the objections already made to his theory that the fundamental reality of the world is Will. If these objections hold good, they are fatal to his argument. He tells us that in artistic contemplation, as well as in the final redemption, the intellect in some way delivers us from the bondage of the Will. How, we may ask, can the intellect, which is the temporary servant of the Will, end by becoming

its master? How can the temporary conquer the permanent? How can intellect be a subordinate element if it avails to make the Will deny itself altogether? How can what is merely a function of the brain not only conquer, but even altogether annihilate, what is eternal and ubiquitous? The Will is said to be all and everything. If so, how can it want for anything? how can it be in constant need? Finally, if life be a constant oscillation between pain and boredom, is not the remedy to be found in work?

V

Two questions remain. In the first place, how are we to explain the fact that for nearly thirty years after its appearance the book in which this philosophy was embodied

failed to attract any attention? If the good word from eminent men were as effective in opening the gates of fame as young authors imagine, Schopenhauer ought not to have been kept waiting, since the greatest writer of the age was impressed by his work. Goethe praised it in the literary circle at Weimar, and especially commended passages dealing with art and the development of character. Jean Paul Richter read it with admiration though not with assent. 'It is,' he said, 'the work of a daring and versatile philosophical genius, acute and penetrating, but often of a bottomless and cheerless depth—like the melancholy lake in Norway, where, encircled in the gloom of precipitous rocks, a man never sees the sun, and of the stars only catches a glimpse ; where no bird flies and not a wave ripples.' Schopenhauer

used to refer to this tribute with gratitude in the years of obscurity to which, as he fancied in his wrath, a conspiracy of other philosophers had condemned him. We know what an amount of abuse he expended on Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and the whole company of University professors who spread their teaching all over Germany. But professors are not the age, and it was the age which turned a deaf ear to what he had to say. The Germany of the generation in which Hegel's philosophy was supreme was the Germany that was slowly recovering from its great defeat by Napoleon, when patriotic, ecclesiastical, and historical interests were everywhere uppermost—the very interests in which Schopenhauer had no part or lot whatever. It was the age of Metternich and the Holy Alliance, when bureaucratic

government was going hand in hand with orthodoxy in resisting the forces of liberalism, whether in politics or in thought, as a public danger. Nevertheless these forces steadily advanced. Historical criticism began to effect a general unsettlement in matters of religious belief, and this was increased by the rising influence of natural science. In politics the revolutionary movement broke out at last into open rebellion all over Europe. With the suppression of the insurrections in 1848 there came a period of disillusion and despondency. The Hegelians were divided amongst themselves and fell from their high estate. Then it was that the hermit of Frankfurt made himself heard, proclaiming that the hopes of civilization were a vain dream, and the ideals of humanity a mockery and a snare. A

popular exposition of his philosophy in the form of essays on various topics soon found many readers, and led to his introduction to the English public in the pages of the *Westminster Review*. Schopenhauer's moment had arrived, and disciples began to gather around him. Whether any of them perceived the true reason of his protracted failure is more than doubtful. Certain it is that none of them was conscious of the full irony of the fact that tendencies with which he had not the slightest sympathy—the growth of historical study, the spread of scientific materialism, and the increase of democratic opinions—were just those that prepared the way for him.

In the second place, how can we best regard a philosophy which tells us that the meaning of life reveals itself not to the speculations of the thinker, but to the in-

sight of the artist and the self-denial of the saint ; which critics have pronounced to be full of contradictions, and in striking conflict with its author's practice ; which has nevertheless compelled an extraordinary amount of attention, was read with interest by a Goethe, adapted to his own uses by a Wagner, and described by a Tolstoi as an intellectual pleasure unexampled in his experience ? Where are we to place a piece of literature which in luminous strength, in apt illustration, in knowledge of the world, in grim humour and deep feeling, is not to be matched, still less excelled, by any similar work in modern times ?

Schopenhauer has himself given us the answer : ' Anyone,' he said, ' can learn a science, one man with more, another with less, trouble. But from art everyone receives only so much as he brings yet

latent within him. For art, unlike science, has to do not with a man's mere reason, but with his inmost nature, where everyone counts only for so much as he really is. This is just what will be the case with my philosophy, for it will be *philosophy as art*.¹ These words, written early in life and expressing his own conception of what he was to do, give us the best position for judging his achievement, and at the same time determining his personal relation to it. He was in his way a poet. If we grasp this fact about Schopenhauer, we shall find that most of the difficulties which we feel in him and his books are unravelled. It explains his theory of philosophy as arising in the vivid impressions of a genius. It explains his description of his own system as a single thought, which

¹ *Neue Paralipomena*, § 18.

he worked up into a picture of the world with a breadth of conception and a fineness of detail that captivate us all. It explains his assertion that his business was not with the *why* and the *wherefore* of things, but with the *what* ; he tries to see them as they are, and to interpret them in their inner reality. This constant looking at objects by themselves led him into inconsistencies and contradictions such as a man more given to reasoning, and to the connexion and combination of ideas, might perhaps have avoided. On the other hand, he tells us nothing which he has not himself felt. His view of life comes home to us because he states it out of the depth of his own experience, and as the direct outcome of that conflict between the Will and the intellect of which he was acutely conscious in his own person. But the fact that he

was an artist also explains his own relation to his work. It explains how, with an extremely sensitive nature and great intelligence, he could picture to himself the sufferings of the world without feeling them as an integral part of his daily life; how he could arrange them as a great spectacle before which he could shudder himself and make others shudder as well. It explains, too, his constant preoccupation with genius, and his significant definition of it as insight at a time when most writers wished to be thought of as inspired. It explains the theatrical view which he took of himself, at one moment as a tragic hero, at another as the subject of a cult, at another as the centre of a band of disciples, and finally as a writer whose books every man must have read if he wishes not to pass for an ignoramus. It explains how

he could regard himself as the teacher of a doctrine, although not as the living embodiment of what he taught. Do not, he says in effect, expect the sculptor to reproduce in his own person the ideal figure which he presents to you in marble ; look at him simply as an artist, and you will understand what he is. He has given you of his best ; take it and be thankful. This may not be the attitude most worthy of a philosopher, but it was the attitude that by his temperament and his method of work was most natural to Schopenhauer.

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